

McGinniss In the Line Of Fire Again

Kennedy Author
Manchester Levels
Plagiarism Charge

7/19/93

By Howard Kurtz
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William Manchester, the historian who wrote the definitive account of John F. Kennedy's assassination, has always felt strongly about his book "The Death of a President." So strongly that he declined all profits, turning them over to the Kennedy Library. So strongly that he went to court to stop NBC from using his material in a movie about Kennedy's death.

Now Manchester is plenty mad at

Joe McGinniss, whose forthcoming book about Ted Kennedy draws heavily on "The Death of a President." After comparing 11 chapters of "The Last Brother" to his 1967 book, Manchester believes he is the victim of plagiarism. One hundred and eighty-seven instances of it, to be exact.

Manchester, who first made the charge to New York Magazine in an interview published today, elaborated in a telephone interview from his Connecticut home. He said he would sue McGinniss's publisher, Simon and Schuster, unless changes are made before the book's release next month.

"I was astonished at the number of instances of copying, and also the pattern," Manchester said. "I'm disturbed, and I've sent what I have to my lawyers." He said he would make it "very clear to Simon and Schuster" that he will go to court if necessary.

"I have to," Manchester said. "If you don't challenge plagiarism, your work passes into the public domain. You lose your copyright."

Manchester, 71, said McGinniss "is allowed to use facts—professionally, I think it's shabby—but he's not allowed to use my words. He's not allowed to use my structure."

McGinniss did not respond to a message left on his answering ma-

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McGINNISS, From B1

chine, but he told New York Magazine in a letter published today that he is "appalled and outraged" at Manchester's accusations.

"My extensive reliance upon the facts contained in Manchester's book . . . does not resemble plagiarism in any way. . . . Once published, the facts contained in his book passed into the public domain," McGinniss said.

"I have drawn heavily from Manchester's account for the facts upon which I have based my own interpretations of Teddy Kennedy's actions and reactions during this period. . . . What I have not done is to appropriate, or to pass off as my own, any of Mr. Manchester's 'ideas' or 'words.'"

McGinniss mentions Manchester several times in his book with such phrases as "As William Manchester would write . . ." The book has no footnotes or source notes.

"The problem is, he doesn't credit 'The Death of a President,'" Manchester said. "Mentioning me doesn't do the job. Yes, he mentions me three or four times, but that really is not satisfactory."

Simon and Schuster officials could not be reached over the weekend. Editor in Chief Michael Korda told New York's John Taylor that he could not comment on the plagiarism issue because "it's a legal matter."

"The Last Brother" has been the focus of front-page controversy since The Washington Post reported last month that a 123-page bound excerpt distributed by the publisher contained an extraordinary disclaimer. The disclaimer said that some thoughts and dialogue were "created by the author."

Simon and Schuster now says it will drop the disclaimer in favor of a longer author's note. The biography is to be excerpted in Vanity Fair, which insists it will be subjected to the usual fact-checking process, and made into an NBC miniseries. McGinniss was paid a reported \$1 million for the book.

Taylor sparked a second contro-

versy two weeks ago when he wrote that "the overwhelming bulk of the material" in the 123-page excerpt came from Manchester's book.

In his rebuttal, McGinniss wrote: "Having seen my work attacked first as 'fiction' replete with 'invented quotation,' I find it ironic, to say the least, to see it now maligned for not being sufficiently inventive. I'm sorry, but my critics can't have it both ways."

Taylor's side-by-side comparisons make clear that McGinniss, while using different wording, leaned heavily on Manchester's work. In one example, Manchester described how a Senate press aide, Richard Riedel, ran onto the Senate floor to tell Ted Kennedy of the assassination on Nov. 22, 1963. As recounted in "The Death of a President":

"The most horrible thing has happened. It's terrible, terrible!"

The senator had been signing correspondence. His pen wavered. He asked, "What is it?"

"Your brother." Riedel remembered that Ted had two brothers. "Your brother the president. He's been shot."

McGinniss's version:

"The most terrible thing has happened! It's terrible! Terrible!"

Teddy was still holding in his right hand the pen he'd been using to sign his correspondence.

"What is it?" Teddy asked. . . .

"Your brother," Riedel said. Then he paused, as if grasping that thus far he'd imparted very little information. It occurred to him, in that instant, that awful as it was, he'd have to say more because, for one thing, Teddy had two brothers.

"Your brother the President," Riedel exclaimed. "He's been shot."

"The man didn't do any work himself," Manchester said. "I described how Teddy Kennedy learned his brother had been killed. He simply reprints what I had, naming the same people. I would've thought another writer would have questioned these people, many of whom are still alive."

Unlike McGinniss, Manchester says, he did not invent thoughts and



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dialogue. "I do say what was going on in people's heads, because people told me."

A professor emeritus at Wesleyan University in Middlebrook, Conn., Manchester is finishing the third volume of a biography of Winston Churchill. He said his copy editors at Little, Brown & Co. alert him if he

paraphrases another historian's work too closely.

"I'm really more baffled by Simon and Schuster than I am by McGinniss. I don't know McGinniss. Simon and Schuster is an established house."

An acquaintance of Jack Kennedy, Manchester was chosen by the family to write an authorized account of the assassination. But Jacqueline Kennedy did not like the manuscript and tried to prevent its publication.

Manchester said he accepted only a \$40,000 advance for his three years of work on the book. He said he and his publisher, Harper & Row, stipulated that all royalties be donated to the Kennedy Library. "I didn't want to become rich because of the death of a friend," he said.

Manchester said he signed an agreement with Robert Kennedy that no part of the book would be used for television. He said he spent \$25,000 on legal fees several years ago to persuade NBC to reshoot several movie scenes that were based on his book.

Manchester sounded weary of the battle over his 26-year-old work. "It's a very special book for me, and I'm very upset about this development," he said.